

Indiana State School Music Association, Inc.

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News & Notes

August 2026

From the Podium

Welcome to the 2026 - 2027 school year! The 2025-26 school year was a resounding success despite all the challenges many music educators faced. Continue to fight the good fight and know ISSMA is here to support you.

Let's put the arts within the context of the push towards workforce development. The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs 2025*, surveying more than 1,000 employers, ranks creative thinking as the fourth most essential durable skill today and among the fastest rising through 2030. The skills now in decline are manual dexterity, endurance, and precision - the routine work that AI does best.

Standard Chartered CEO Bill Winters told Bloomberg in January 2026 that as machines handle technical work, curiosity, communication, and empathy have become the real differentiator, and that the humanities taught him how to think. Executives, economists, and educators are converging on the same point: human judgement and creativity grow more valuable, not less.

The arts are already an economic engine. Nationally, arts and culture contributed \$1.2 trillion in 2023, approximately 4.2% of the GDP which included 5.4 million jobs, growing at more than twice the rate of the overall economy according to the NEA/U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

In Indiana, arts and cultural production adds roughly \$10.1 billion and employs 92,643 Hoosiers! More than 160,000 work in the creative industry and nearly 60% are small business entrepreneurs with Indianapolis's nonprofit arts sector generating nearly \$524 million a year according to NEA/BEA and Americans for the Arts.

Studies have shown that arts experiences strengthen critical-thinking skills, and develop creativity and empathy, all of which are skills employers say they cannot automate. Music education and the arts personify workforce development. Remember this as your district navigates the accountability piece with the diploma seals!

Randy Greenwell, ISSMA Executive Director

Katy Briel Appointed ISSMA Instrumental Education Director

As most of you know, Mark Middleton retired this spring as the Instrumental Education Director. We thank Mark for his service and look forward to his new part-time position with ISSMA as Operations Manager. The Executive Committee interviewed several quality candidates to fill Mark's role and chose Ms. Katy Briel as the new ISSMA Instrumental Education Director. Ms. Briel taught middle school bands for 22 years - 20 of those at Clark-Pleasant MS in Greenwood, IN and 2 years at Lincoln Junior High School in Plymouth, IN. During that time, she also assisted with the Whiteland Community HS Marching Band and leadership team. She is the Band Director Coordinator for the DCI INpact Band/Bandtastic! Indy, co-coordinator of the Indiana Junior All State Band, and has served on the ISSMA State Board and as an ISSMA adjudicator and host for various events. She is a member of Phi Beta Mu and was named the 2026 Outstanding Bandmaster as well as the 2026 IMEA Middle School Teacher of Excellence, and the 2025 NFHS Outstanding Music Educator (Indiana). She is excited to serve the Directors and Music Students in Indiana in this new role.

Pete Sampson Your 2026-27 ISSMA President

Entering his 28th year of teaching, Peter Sampson has been the Director of Bands at Whiteland Community High School since 2008. During his tenure he has led the WCHS Band program to consistent Gold and "With Distinction" ratings in Concert and Jazz band festivals, consistent ISSMA Semi-State marching band appearances, as well as jazz and concert State Finals appearances. In addition, Whiteland HS has nineteen consecutive Indiana State School Music Association All-Music Awards. Mr. Sampson has presented clinic sessions at several state conferences and the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic on a wide variety of topics from technology integration to jazz performance. As a clinician, he has conducted a variety of honor bands in multiple states, served as an adjudicator at the Utah State Jazz Festival, and has published multiple articles for NAFME's Teaching Music, as well as contributing to a chapter in Teaching Music through Performance in Jazz, Volume 3. Mr. Sampson is a member of Phi Beta Mu, was named the 2021 "Outstanding High School Music Teacher" by the Indiana Music Education Association, a national "Distinguished Music Educator" by Yale University, a 2020 Grammy National Music Educator Award Semi-finalist, and a "Graduate of the Last Decade" by Ball State University. Mr. Sampson also serves as Vice-President of the Indiana Jazz Education Association, a member of the Jazz Education Network Education Committee, and is the IMEA State Jazz Chair. Mr. Sampson is a cum laude graduate of Ball State University and Indiana University. He resides in Whiteland, Indiana with his wife Julie and twin sons Conner and Luke.

**Exciting Additions to ISSMA Events
and Office Staff for 2026-2027**

-We are excited to announce that beginning this year, all ISSMA events except for Solo and Ensemble will utilize **CompetitionSuite** as the official method for delivering feedback commentary and ratings to students and directors. If you serve or wish to serve as an ISSMA adjudicator, we will be providing some training sessions to help you become acclimated to the extremely beneficial uses of this judging application.

-**John Phillips** will be serving in the capacity of Judge Administrator for all ISSMA Marching Band Events. We are excited to benefit from John's vast experience as the past Judge Administrator for DCI, and current capacity as a Judge Administrator for Bands of America. John is a resident of Indianapolis and has been intimately involved in the redesign of the ISSMA Marching Band score sheets approved by the Marching Band Committee and State Board this past spring for use in our 2026 marching band season.

-**Mark Middleton** will continue in a part-time capacity as the new ISSMA Operations Manager. Mark will be engaged in several aspects of our event management, and we are blessed to be able to lean into Mark's wisdom and skill sets for the benefit of all ISSMA members.

-**Amanda Cranfield** will be joining us as a part-time Administrative Technician. Amanda is a band mom, with a daughter beginning her freshman year at Avon HS. Amanda was an oboe player and color guard member at Decatur Central many years ago and currently serves as a part-time employee at DCI in addition to working part-time as a travel agent. We are excited to welcome Amanda to the team and know that we will benefit from her energy and skill sets.

-Introducing **ISSMA TV!** We are excited to enter a corporate partnership with School Broadcast Network as our provider for not only live streaming of ISSMA Marching Band Events, but for On Demand services as well. Customers will have the opportunity to live-stream the following events for 2026: ISSMA Scholastic Finals, ISSMA Open Class Semi-State, and ISSMA Open Class State Finals. The 2025 Open Class State Finals will be available for On Demand Streaming soon. Subscription details for the 2026 season will be provided via email and social media.

-Our new official ISSMA Photographer for all ISSMA state events will be **Perform Photography!** We are excited to work with Tony McCrackin and his team, as they have a wealth of experience. Please support his business with all your group photography needs.

-The Spring of 2027 will see the addition of a **String Orchestra** event added to the State Concert Qualifications and State Concert Finals events. We are excited to offer this opportunity as an addition to State Concert Finals weekend! Those qualifying will perform at Lawrence Central HS on Friday evening, May 7.

Please utilize the issma.net website for access to all fees, rule changes and procedures related to ISSMA events. The only fee changes for 2026-27 involves adult admission prices for ISSMA Marching Band events this fall. There are several rule changes for 2026-27 **and it is a director's responsibility to be aware of these changes.** All rule changes appear in red print in the Festivals Manual. Schedule some time each day to acclimate yourself to the ISSMA website (issma.net) and the resources available to you. Please remember that all ISSMA Entry Deadlines are ALWAYS on Wednesdays throughout the year! The exception of course is State Solo and Ensemble Entries which are due on the day of the event!

Membership fees, entry fees, orders for medals, patches, rockers, and choral sight-reading booklets may be paid with a credit card or electronic check through the **ISSMA Online Payment Center**. School Purchase Orders may now be uploaded when submitting an order for materials. Directors should log into the "Directors Only" area of the ISSMA Website and click the "Material Order Forms" link to place an order. **Please be aware that all State Solo and Ensemble entries must now be paid for online. This can be done with credit card, e-check or by uploaded purchase order. Therefore, the host will no longer be able to take a paper check or purchase order on site. This is the same process we use for district solo and ensemble events and will provide consistency in process for directors across these two events.**

ISSMA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The complete 2026-2027 Calendar of Events and Event Deadlines, the Calendar of Meeting Dates, as well as the *Potential Calendar* for the next five years can be found on the ISSMA website under the "Resources" tab.

CONGRATULATIONS To Our 2026 Honorees!

2026 ISSMA Distinguished Service Award

Katie Hein – Ben Davis H.S.

Lisha Rickey – Seeger Memorial Jr-Sr H.S.

Tim Rinehold – Clark-Pleasant M.S.

Kerry & Terri Tucker – Beech Grove H.S.

2026 Phi Beta Mu Outstanding Band Master

Katy Briel – Clark-Pleasant M.S.

2026 NFHS Outstanding Midwest Music Educator

Kyle Weirich – Elkhart H.S.

2026 NFHS Heart of the Arts Award

Craige Phipps – Knox H.S.

SOLO AND ENSEMBLE REVISIONS

Vocal: The Vocal Group I Required List Manual has been revised. It is **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** that you notify students and private teachers of the changes which include several **deletions and additions**. All ISSMA Solo & Ensemble Required List Manuals are available under the "Resources" tab of the ISSMA Website.